

Survey Reveals Vermont's Fish and Wildlife are Important Recreationally and Economically

By John Hall

Fish and wildlife resources are important to all Vermonters who hunt, fish or watch wildlife, but these resources also contribute greatly to our economy according to the 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation conducted by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and U.S. Census Bureau.

State-by-state preliminary data from the survey were released September 12, by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The nationwide survey revealed that Vermonters ranked second only to Alaskans in enjoying fish and wildlife resources recreationally in 2011. Sixty-two percent of Vermonters went fishing, hunting or wildlife watching, or enjoyed a combination of these activities, while 64 percent of Alaskans did the same.

"This survey underscores the importance Vermonters' place on wildlife-related recreation," said Vermont Fish & Wildlife Commissioner Patrick Berry. "Our hunting, fishing and wildlife watching opportunities contribute greatly to why this state is a great place to live and do business."

Vermont led the New England states in hunting and fishing with 26 percent of residents participating in one or the other, or both. When it comes to wildlife watching, however, Vermont was first in the nation with an impressive 53 percent of residents enjoying this activity.

Not only are fish- and wildlife-based activities important forms of recreation, they are also vital to the state's economic health.

Hunting provides a major boost to Vermont's economy after leaf peeping ends and before skiing season. In 2011, resident and nonresident hunters spent \$268.7 million in Vermont.

"Hunting, particularly, comes at a fortuitous time for our tourist centered businesses – after the leaves are off and before the skis are on," said Berry. "Fishing and turkey hunting also spike big in the spring, after skiing is done and before summer tourism gets rolling."

In fact, the federal survey reveals that Vermont's economy gets a major economic lift from sport-fishing with resident and nonresident anglers spending \$147.2 million in 2011 on fishing in Vermont.

People also spent \$288.5 million to watch wildlife in Vermont in 2011. Wildlife watching activities are defined as observing, feeding or photographing wildlife. Feeding birds at home is considered the primary wildlife watching activity.

In total, \$704.4 million was spent in 2011 on fish- and wildlife-based recreational activities in Vermont.

"These expenditures are spread throughout the entire state, including some of its most remote regions where other recreational spending is slim," explained Berry. "Fish and wildlife recreation is a bright spot in Vermont's economic picture. I hope the survey results help all of us appreciate the positive impact fish and wildlife resources have on our lives."

The National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation is one of the most important sources of information on fish and wildlife recreation in the United States. Conducted at five-year intervals since 1955, the survey quantifies the amount of recreation and expenditures that can be attributed to these resources. Federal, state and private organizations use the information in the survey results to manage wildlife, market products and look for trends. The survey was done by telephone with more than 500 Vermont households interviewed in 2011.